

AmeriCorps Program Management Frequently Asked Questions

Revised: January 6, 2011



Q. What type of criminal history check is required for a potential applicant that has dual citizenship and currently resides in a foreign country?

A: The minimum requirement is to check the last place they resided in the US and the state where the program operates.

Q: The regulations indicate that all grant funded positions need to receive a history check. If a staff person does not receive any federal funding are they required to have a history check?

A: Individuals holding grantee staff positions that are fully budgeted to be paid from non-federal share (match) are in covered positions and must undergo national service criminal history checks. Since the 2007 regulations went into effect, "grant-funded" has never been intended to limit coverage to only individuals who had federal dollars paying some of their salary. Grantees can without federal review and likely without commission approval change the ratio of federal to non-federal share for a position, thus the ratio of where the money comes from is not controlling in the position being "grant-funded" – (According to Doug Godesky at CNCS)

Q. Do existing program staff need to have to have all history checks completed on themselves before the April 2011 deadline?

A. The April 2011 deadline is expected to have no impact on existing program staff because we do not expect the upcoming regulations to require retro-active checks on existing staff – the two waves or law/regulations we've had so far have only in a minor way required existing employees to have checks. Existing program staff needed national service criminal history checks at certain milestones as follows:

- November 23, 2007: Any existing program staff with recurring access to a vulnerable population needed National Sex Offender Public Registry Checks within 90 days of this date (when the regulations went into effect).
- November 23, 2007 – September 30, 2009: Any new program staff, with recurring access to a vulnerable population, needed a full two-part check performed (NSOPR + statewide repository or repositories).
- October 1, 2009 – current: Any new program staff hired has needed a full two-part check. Existing program staff as of October 1, 2009 were grand-fathered in and did not need checks.

- April 21, 2011 – Any new program staff hired on / after this date, who will have recurring access to vulnerable population, require a three-part check (NSOPR, Statewide, and FBI). Other new staff without such access continue to need the two-part checks.

So, based on the above, an existing program employee in November 2007, needed an NSOPR check, and since then, has not needed any additional checks, and is not expected to need one in April 2011.

Q. Do the same rules apply to program staff in regards to history checks if they reside in another state at time of application?

A. Yes, an out-of-state applicant needs both the MT statewide, plus a statewide repository check for their state of residence. Currently, an FBI check can be used to substitute for the statewide checks. After April 21, 2001, the FBI becomes part 3 of the check for positions with access to vulnerable populations, and is in addition to the statewide repository checks.

Q: Is accounting assistance to maintain books an allowable operating expense or would this fall under admin/indirect costs in the budget?

A: This depends on the type of program. If the program is a nonprofit, then this would be a possible direct charge to the grant. This could be directly charged provided the accounting costs are specific to AmeriCorps and keeping the books for those types of costs.

Q: Our members will be installing and distributing compact fluorescent light bulbs. Is it permissible to charge light bulbs to the federal share of expenses?

A: Assuming this is part of the program's approved goals and objectives, it would be an allowable direct charge to the grant.

Q: Where should printing costs be listed in the budget?

A: Printing costs should be charged to Section I – Other. If the program is purchasing true printing supplies, then it would be a supply cost.

Q: Is a tribal ID sufficient as primary documentation of status as a U.S. citizen?

A: No. A tribal ID is not listed as one of the allowable forms of primary identification. Allowable forms of primary identification include the following:

- (1) A birth certificate showing that the individual was born in one of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, or the Northern Mariana Islands;
- (2) A United States passport;
- (3) A report of birth abroad of a U.S. Citizen (FS-240) issued by the State Department;
- (4) A certificate of birth-foreign service (FS 545) issued by the State Department;
- (5) A certification of report of birth (DS-1350) issued by the State Department;
- (6) A certificate of naturalization (Form N-550 or N-570) issued by

the Immigration and Naturalization Service; or (7) A certificate of citizenship (Form N-560 or N-561) issued by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. – Source AmeriCorps Regulations – Subpart B

Q: What should I do if a member is concerned about whether or not the living stipend will impact any benefits that they are currently receiving (i.e. Medicaid, TANF, etc.)?

A: It is often best to have the member contact the Office of Public Assistance (OPA). For a list of OPA offices visit:

<http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/contactus/humancommunityservices.shtml>.

Q: If a member is in the US Military Reserve's how does this effect his/her AmeriCorps term of service?

A: The member may receive credit for their service in the military for up to two weeks. During the two weeks they would continue to receive a living allowance. If they request additional time then you would need to suspend their term of service due to compelling personal circumstances. For more details see CNCS FAQ C.45.

Q: Under the Serve America Act when will the increased Education Award go into effect?

A: The increased education award will only be available for those positions funded with 2010 appropriation funds and beyond.

Q: Can a member serve more hours then the maximum allotted for fundraising and member development?

A: The member may exceed the cap on member development hours but not for fundraising. See details below.

Fundraising Hours: An AmeriCorps member may spend no more than ten percent of his or her originally agreed-upon term of service, as reflected in the member enrollment in the National Service Trust, performing fundraising activities, as described in §2520.40.

Member Development: No more than 20 percent of the aggregate of all AmeriCorps member service hours in your program, as reflected in the member enrollments in the National Service Trust, may be spent in education and training activities.

Q: Do AmeriCorps programs need to register any new hires (including program staff and AmeriCorps members) with the Department of Health and Human Services, Child Support Enforcement Division?

A: Yes, however, only those members that are receiving a living allowance. The Federal share of a member's living allowance is not subject to garnishment. The state/private portion of the living allowance is subject to garnishment in Montana for child support.

Under Montana law even though members receive a living allowance and not a wage the law does not require it to be considered a wage. Also, see CNCS FAQ C. 18.

Q. Where can I purchase service gear?

A: <http://www.nationalservicegear.com/>

Q: Can we record match from an elected state or county official?

A: The status of an individual in terms of profession, public or private official, elected or appointed does not affect whether time and effort can be claimed as match. What does apply are the restrictions on using time commission members spend as commission board members as match (not allowed) and the guidance on how to value that time.

Whatever the in-kind service is provided, it must be necessary under the grant and valued at what the function would cost, not what the person's profession may be.....if they are not providing their professional services. E.g. if a lawyer provides service to drive people to doctors' appointments, he or she cannot value the time spent driving at the hourly rate charged as an attorney. If they donate their services to file papers to incorporate an organization as a non-profit or develop organizational by-laws, they can value the time based on their hourly rate as an attorney.

Q: If a member volunteers their time and the service is unrelated to the programs design are these hours allowable?

A: Programs may decide whether or not community service hours, unrelated to the programs design, are allowable. For example, a member, whose service description includes mentoring and tutoring but volunteers at the food bank on the weekend.

The CNCS Office of Grants Management wants programs to provide documentation for all service hours with a separate verification of non-program related hours. For example, if a member serves 8 hours on a Saturday at the local food bank, then someone from the food bank must verify these hours by signing a form. This form must be attached to the member's timesheet and approved by the member's supervisor.